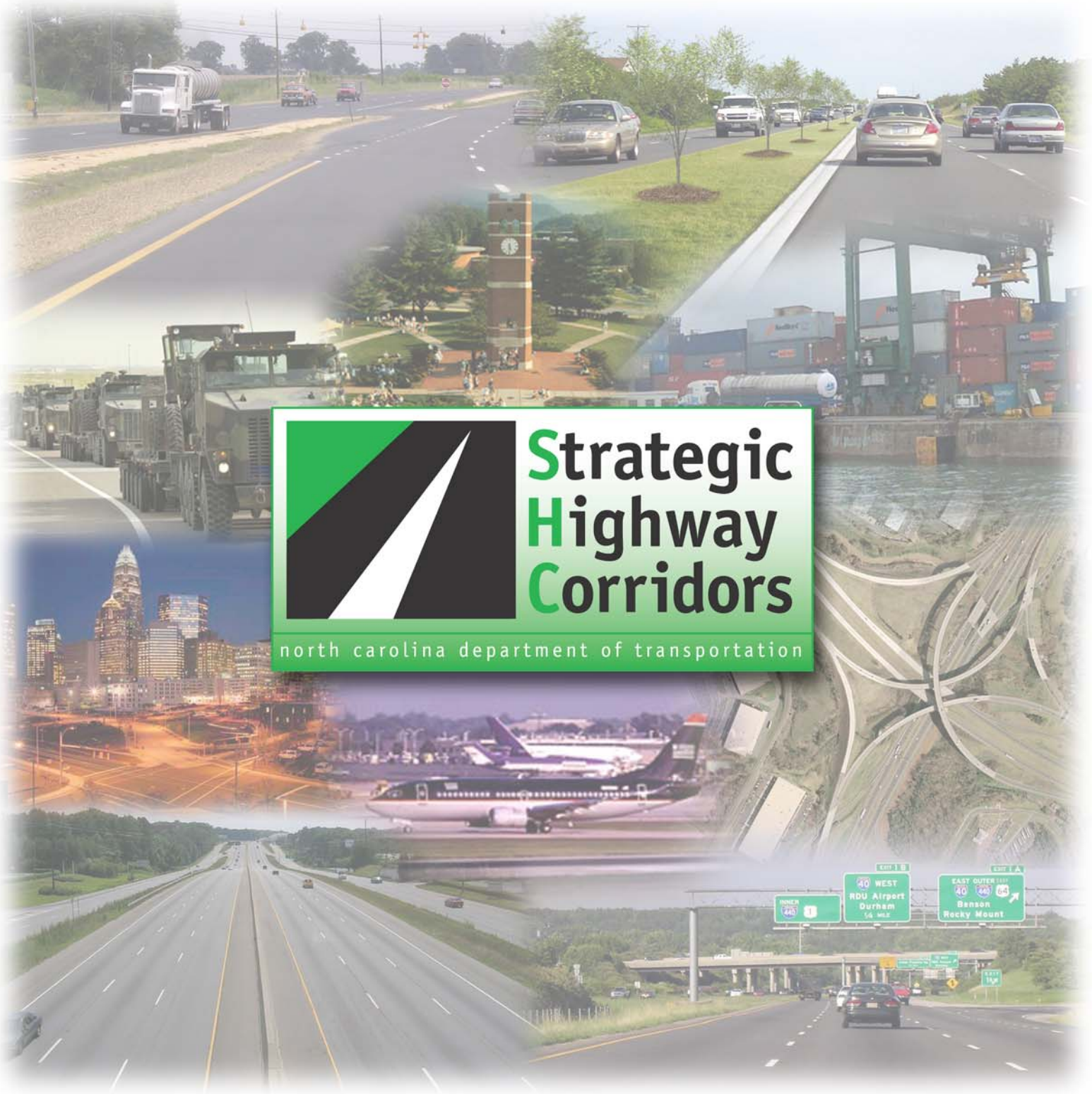


CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT REPORT



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BRANCH
OCTOBER 2005

THE STRATEGIC HIGHWAY CORRIDORS CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Prepared by:



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Executive Summary

North Carolina has changed dramatically over the last 20 years and will continue to do so well into the 21st century. Change in travel patterns, increase in population and vehicle miles traveled, and burgeoning domestic and international trade are all putting additional strains on North Carolina's transportation system. In an renewed effort to enhance and preserve the backbone of the state's highway system, the Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in collaboration with the Department of Commerce (NCDOC) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) created the Strategic Highway Corridors (SHC) concept. The SHC concept represents a timely initiative to protect and maximize the mobility and connectivity on a core set of highway corridors throughout North Carolina, while promoting environmental stewardship through maximizing the use of existing facilities to the extent possible, and fostering economic prosperity through the quick and efficient movement of people and goods. Each Corridor represents an opportunity for NCDOT, partnering agencies, and other stakeholders to consider a long-term vision, consistency in decision-making, land use partnerships, and overarching design and operational changes.

The primary purpose of the SHC concept is to provide a network of high-speed, safe, reliable highways throughout North Carolina. The primary goal to support this purpose is to create a greater consensus towards the development of a genuine vision for each Corridor - specifically towards the identification of a desired facility type (Freeway, Expressway, Boulevard, or Thoroughfare) for each Corridor. Buy-in towards this vision and desired facility type would affect decision-making throughout the project improvement process, i.e., affecting funding decisions, project planning decisions, design decisions, access and operational decisions (driveway permit approvals and traffic signal installations), and local land use decisions.

This concept has undergone a number of changes over the course of the past three years. Initially, a set of governing criteria was developed to guide the corridor selection process. These criteria focused on mobility, connectivity to activity centers, connectivity to interstates, interstate relief routes, major hurricane evacuation routes, and corridors that are part of a national or statewide highway system. Activity centers include urban areas with a population of 20,000 or greater, state seaports, major airports, major intermodal terminals, major military installations, University of North Carolina system campuses, trauma centers, and major tourist attractions. Input from public forums and from members of the North Carolina Board of Transportation (BOT) and NCDOT Highway Operations staff have also been instrumental in further refining and improving this concept. The result is a long-range highway planning vision for the state, illustrated by a Vision Plan with the proposed facility types and documented as a set of recommended Corridors. The 5400 miles of designated Strategic Highway Corridors, which include existing and proposed interstates, account for only 7% of the state's highway system, but carry 45% of the traffic.

Implementation efforts of the concept focus on six different areas:

- **Education.** Educating all stakeholders on the concept on a continual basis to ensure those involved are aware of the latest activities and policies.
- **Long-Range Planning.** Individual Comprehensive Transportation Plans will incorporate the long-term vision of each Corridor. Additionally, a series of corridor studies may be undertaken to define needs, issues, and unique challenges of each Corridor. These studies provide all stakeholders an opportunity to be involved at the beginning of the planning process.
- **Project Planning and Design.** Projects along Corridors will be developed in a manner to achieve the long-term vision and goals of the initiative.

- **Corridor Access.** All driveway permits and traffic signal requests along the Corridors will be carefully examined for consistency with the long-term vision for the corridor. Driveway consolidation and sharing will be highly encouraged, and alternative solutions to traffic signals will be pursued.
- **Land Use.** Consistent and compatible land use decisions are needed to support the goals of the initiative. Mechanisms will be developed to assist local jurisdictions in helping to protect mobility and safety along the Corridors.
- **Corridor Protection.** Managing development along the Corridors (both for existing and new location facilities) is essential for achieving the long-term vision for each facility. Tools, techniques, and strategies will be identified for protecting the Corridors, such as the use of access management.

The SHC concept was adopted by the BOT on September 2, 2004, as a part of North Carolina's Long-Range, Multimodal Statewide Transportation Plan. Following adoption, a formal policy statement on the initiative was endorsed by NCDOT, NCDOC, NCDENR, and the Governor's Office.

Continued documentation of all activities, tasks, decisions, and other items of notable importance, is essential during the evolvement of this initiative for future decision-makers, engineers, planners, and other stakeholders. In addition, NCDOT has created a comprehensive and dynamic website for all information related to the SHC initiative located at <http://www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/shc>.

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List of Acronyms

ADHS	Appalachian Development Highway System
ADT	Average Daily Traffic
BOT	(North Carolina) Board of Transportation
CTP	Comprehensive Transportation Plan
DOT	Department of Transportation
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GIS	Geographic Information System
ICI	Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NCDCR	North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
NCDENR	North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
NCDOC	North Carolina Department of Commerce
NCDOT	North Carolina Department of Transportation
NCSPA	North Carolina State Ports Authority
NCWRC	North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act (of 1969)
NHS	National Highway System
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
ROD	Record of Decision
RPO	Rural Planning Organization
SHC	Strategic Highway Corridors
STP	North Carolina's Long-Range Multimodal Statewide Transportation Plan
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled

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